

# The Land of Broken Promises.

By DANDE COOLIDGE

"Good enough!" he muttered, and, after watching him for a minute in silence, and leaving the new boss in command, he went back and started supper.

That was the beginning of a new day at the Eagle Tail, and when De Lancy came back from town—whither he went whenever he could conjure up an errand—he found that, for once, he had not been missed.

Bud was doing the blacksmithing, Amigo was directing the gang, and a fresh mess of beans was on the fire, the first kettleful having gone to reinforce the Yaqui's backbone. But they were beans well spent, and Bud did not regret the raid on his grub-pile. If he could get half as much work for what he fed the Mexicans he could well rest content.

"But how did 'his Indian happen to find you?" demanded Phil, when his partner had explained his acquisition. "Say, he must have deserted from his company when they brought them back from the Azuma!"

"More likely," assented Bud. "He ain't taking no chance, but I notice he keeps his eye on 'em—they'd shoot him for a deserter if they could catch him. I'd hate to see him go that way."

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"You can't timber that rock," answered De Lancy decidedly. "And besides, it's cheaper to make a cut twenty feet deep than it is to tunnel or sink a shaft. Wait till we get to that porphyry contact—then we'll know where we're at."

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"The only fighting there was was when a bunch of twenty Yaquis got away from their officers in the rough country and went after Bernardo Bravo by their lonesome. That threw a big scare into him, too, but he managed to fight them off—and if I was making a guess I'd bet that your Yaqui friend was one of that fighting twenty."

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Evidently he had learned the object of their search from the Mexicans, but if he looked for any demonstrations of delight at sight of these much-sought-for tools he was doomed to disappointment, for both Bud and Phil had schooled themselves to keep their faces straight.

"Um-m," said Bud, "old drills, eh? Where you find them?"

The Yaqui led the way to the face of the cut and showed the spot, a hole beneath the pile of riven rock; and a Mexican, not to be outdone, grabbed up a handful of porphyry and indicated where the dynamite had pulverized it.

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"tengo!" He drew a second piece from his pocket and placed them together. "It is the same!" he said.

Still half-buried in the excavation, he turned suddenly as a shadow crossed him, to get the light, and his jaw dropped at the sight of Bud.

"I'll trouble you for that rock," observed Bud, holding out his hand, and as the rural tumbled, Aragon handed over the ore. There was a moment's silence as Bud looked over the piece—then he stepped back and motioned them out with his gun.

Down the jagged cut the rural, awed into a guilty silence by his anger, and when he let them mount without a word the rural looked back, surprised. Even then Bud said nothing, but the swing of the Texan's gun spoke for him, and they rode quickly out of sight.

"You dad-burned greasers!" growled Bud, returning his pistol with a jab to its holster. Then he looked at the ore. There were two pieces, one fresh and the other worn, and as he gazed at them the worn piece seemed strangely familiar. Aragon had been comparing them—but where had he got the worn piece?

Once more Bud looked it over, and then the rock fell from his hand. It was the first piece they had found—the piece that belonged to Phil!

## CHAPTER XV.

When the solid earth quakes, though it move but a thousandth of an inch beneath our feet, the human brain reels and we become dizzy, sick and afraid. So, too, at the thought that some trusted friend has played us false, the mind reels back upon itself and we doubt the stability of everything—our own sanity. Then, as we find all the world straight up, the world intact, and the hills in their proper places, and the treacherous doubts as if they had never been, the voice of reason, that awful moment Hooker saw him betrayed by his friend, either through weakness or through guile; and then his mind straightened itself and he remembered that Phil was in

what more natural, then, than that the rurales should search his pockets and give the ore to Aragon? He stooped and picked up the chunk of rock—that precious, pocket-worn specimen that had brought them the first piece of success—and wiped it on his sleeve.

Mechanically he placed it beside the other piece which Aragon had gouged from the edge, and while he gazed at them he wondered what to do—to leave their mine and go to his friend, or to let his friend wait and stand guard by their treasure—and his heart told him to go to his friend.

So he swung up on his horse and followed slowly, and as soon as it was dark he rode secretly through Old Fortuna and on till he came to the jail. It was a square stone structure, built across the street from the cantina in order to be convenient for the drunks, and as Bud rode up close and stared at it, some one hailed him through the bars.

"Hello there, pardner," called Hooker, leaning down and striding over to the back window, "how long have they had you in here?"

"Two days," answered Phil from the inner darkness; "but it seems like a lifetime to me. Say, Bud, there's a Mexican in here that's got the Jim-jams—regular tequila jag—can't you get me out?"

"Well, I sure will!" answered Bud; "what have they got you in for? Where's our friend, Don Juan? Why didn't he let me know?"

"You can search me!" called De Lancy. "Seems like everybody quits you down here the minute you get into trouble. I got arrested night before last by those d—d rurales—Manuel Del Rey was behind it, you can bet your life on that—and I've been here ever since!"

"Well, what you pinched for?" "Who do I go to?" "Pinched for nothing!" cried De Lancy bitterly. "Pinched because I'm a Mexican citizen and can't protect myself! I'm incomunicado for three days!"

"Well, I'll get you out, all right," said Hooker, leaning closer against the bars. "Here, have a smoke—off they frisk you of your makings?" "No!" snapped De Lancy crossly, "but I'm out of everything by this time. Bud, I tell you I've had a time of it! They threw me in here with this crazy, murdering Mexican and I haven't had a wink of sleep for two days. He's quiet now, but I don't want any more."

"Well, say," began Bud again, "what are you charged with? Maybe I can grease somebody's paw and get you out tonight!"

There was an awkward pause at this, and finally De Lancy dropped his white face against the bars and his voice became low and beseeching. "I'll tell you, Bud," he said, "I haven't been quite on the square with you—I've been holding out a little. But you know how it is—when a fellow's in love, I've been going to see Gracia!"

"Oh!" commented Hooker, and stood very quiet while he waited. "Yes, I've been going to see her," hurried on Phil. "I know I promised; but, honest, Bud, I couldn't help it. It just seemed as if my whole being was wrapped up in her, and I had to do it. She'd be looking for me when I came and went—and then I fixed it with her maid to take her a letter. And then I met her secretly, back by the garden gate. You know they've got some holes punched in the wall—looked during the fight last summer—and we'd—"

"Sure, I'll take your word for that,"



"What Are You Pinched For?"

broke in Hooker harshly. "But get to the point! What are you pinched for?"

"Well," went on De Lancy, his voice quivering at the reproach, "I was going to tell you, if you'll listen to me. Somebody saw us there and told Aragon—he shut her up for a punishment and she slipped me out a note—well, I couldn't stand it—I hired the string band and we went down there in a hack to give her a serenade. But this cad, Manuel del Rey, who has been acting like a jealous ass all along, swooped down on us with a detachment of his rurales and took us all to jail. He let the musicians out the next morning, but I've been here ever since."

"Yes, and what are you charged with?" demanded Bud brusquely. "Drunk," confessed Phil, and Bud grunted. "Huh!" he said "and me out watching that mine night and day!"

"Oh, I know I've done you dirt, Bud," wailed De Lancy; "but I didn't mean to, and I'll never do it again." "Never do what?" inquired Bud roughly. "I won't touch another drop of booze as long as I'm in Mexico!" cried Phil. "Not a drop!"

"And how about the girl?" continued Bud inexorably. "Her old man was out and tried to jump our mine today—how about her?"

"Well," faltered De Lancy, "I'll—she—"

"You know your promise!" reminded Bud. "Yes, I know. But—oh, Bud, if you knew how loyal I've been to you—if you knew what offers I've resisted—the mine stands in my name, you know."

"Well?" "Well, Aragon came around to me last week and said if I'd give him a half interest in it he'd—well, never mind—it was a great temptation. But did I fall for it? Not on your life! I know you, Bud, and I know you're honest—you'd stay by me to the last ditch, and I'll do the same by you. But I'm in love, Bud, and that would make a man forget his promise if he wasn't true as steel."

"Yes," commented Hooker dryly. "I don't reckon I can count on you much from now on. Here, take a look at this and see what you make of it. He drew the piece of ore that he had taken from Aragon from his pocket and held it up in the moonlight. "Well, feel of it, then," he said. "Shucks, you ought to know that piece of rock, Phil—it's the first one we found in our mine!"

"No!" exclaimed De Lancy, starting back; "why—where'd you get it?" "Never mind where I got it!" answered Hooker. "The question is: What did you do with it?"

"Well, I might as well come through with it," confessed Phil, the last of his assurance gone. "I gave it to Gracia!"

"And I took it away from Aragon," continued Bud, "while he was digging some more chunks out of our mine. So that is your idea of being true as steel, is it? You've done noble by me and Kruger, haven't you? Yes, you've been a good pardner, I don't think!"

"Well, don't throw me down, Bud!" pleaded Phil. "There's some mistake somewhere. Her father must have found it and taken it away! I'd stake my life on it that Gracia would never betray me!"

"Well, think it over for a while," suggested Bud, edging his words with sarcasm. "I'm going up to the hotel!"

"No; come back!" cried De Lancy, clamoring at the bars. "Come on back, Bud! Here!" he said, thrusting his hand out through the heavy iron. "I'll give you my word for it—I won't see her again until we get our title! Will that satisfy you? Then give me your hand, pardner—I'm sorry I did you wrong!"

"It ain't me," replied Hooker soberly, as he took the trembling hand; "it's Kruger. But if you'll keep your word, Phil, maybe we can win out yet. I'm going up to find the comisario."

A brief interview with that smiling individual and the case of Phil De Lancy was laid bare. He had been engaged in a desperate rivalry with Manuel del Rey for the hand of Gracia Aragon, and his present incarceration was not only for singing rag-time beneath the Aragon windows, but for trying to whip the captain of the rurales when the latter tried to place him under arrest.

And De Lancy was the prisoner not of the comisario, but of the captain of the rurales. So, at heart, Bud rode

up through the Mexican quarters to the cuartel of the rurales, but the captain was inexorable.

"No, senior," he said, waving an eloquent finger before his nose, "I cannot release your friend, No, senior!"

"But what is he charged with?" persisted Bud, "and when is his trial? You can't keep him shut up without a trial."

At this the captain of the rurales lifted his eyebrows and one closely waxed mustachio and smiled mysteriously.

"Y como no?" he inquired. "And why not? Is he not a Mexican citizen?"

"Well, perhaps he is!" thundered Bud, suddenly rising to his full height, "but I am not! I am an American, senior captain, and there are other Americans! If you hold my friend without a trial I will come and tear your fall down—and the comisario will not stop me, either!"

"Ah!" observed the dandy little captain, shrugging his mustachio once more and blinking, and while Hooker raged back and forth he looked him over appraisingly.

"One moment!" he said at last, raising a quieting hand. "These are perilous times, senior, in which all the defenders of Fortuna should stand together. I do not wish to have a difference with the Americans when Bernardo Bravo and his men are marching to take our town. No, I value the friendship of the valiant Americans very highly—so I will let your friend go. But first he must promise me one thing—not to trouble the Senior Aragon by making further love to his daughter!"

"Very well!" replied Bud. "He has already promised that to me; so come on and let him out."

"To you?" repeated Manuel del Rey with a faint smile. "Then, perhaps—"

"Perhaps nothing!" broke in Hooker shortly. "Come on!"

He led the way impatiently while the captain, his saber clanking, strode out and rode beside him. He was not a big man, this swathing captain of the rural police, but he was master, nevertheless, of a great district, from Fortuna to the line, with a reputation for quick work in the pursuance of his duty as well as in the primrose ways of love.

In the insurrections and raidings of the previous summer he had given the coup de grace with his revolver to more than one embryo bandit, and in his love affairs he had shown that he could be equally summary.

The elegant Feliz Luna, who for a time had lingered near the charming Gracia, had finally found himself up against a pair of pistols with the option of either fighting Captain del Rey or returning to his parents. The young man concluded to beat a retreat. For a like offense Phil De Lancy had been unceremoniously thrown into jail; and now the captain turned his attention to Bud Hooker, whose mind he had not yet fathomed.

"Excuse me, senior," he said, after a brief silence, "but your words left me in doubt—whether to regard you as a friend or a rival."

"What?" demanded Bud, whose knowledge of Spanish did not extend to the elegancies.

"You said," explained the captain politely, "that your friend had promised you he would not trouble the lady further. Does that mean that you are interested in her yourself, or merely that you perceive the hopelessness of his suit and wish to protect him from a greater evil that may well befall him? For look you, senior, the girl is mine, and no man can come between us!"

"Huh!" snorted Bud, who caught the last all right. Then he laughed shortly and shrugged his shoulders. "He don't know what you're talking about," he said gruffly, "but he will stay away, all right."

"My bien," responded Del Rey carelessly and, dismounting at the jail, he threw open the door and stood aside for his rival to come out.

"Muchas gracias, senior captain," saluted Bud, as the door creaked to behind his pardner. But Phil still bristled with anger and defiance, and the captain perceived that there would be no thanks from him.

"It is nothing," he replied, bowing politely, and something in the way he said it made De Lancy choke with rage. But there by the carcel door was not the place for picking quarrels. They went to the hotel, where Don Juan, all apologies for his apparent neglect—which he excused on the ground that De Lancy had been held incomunicado—placated them as best he could and hurried on to the news.

"My gracious, Don Felipe," he cried, "you don't know how sorry I was to see you in jail, but the captain's orders were that no one should go near you—and in Mexico we obey the rurales, you know. Otherwise we are placed against a wall and shot."

"But have you heard the news from down below? Ah, what terrible times they are having there—ranches raided, women stolen, rich men held for ransom! Yes, it is worse than ever! Already I am receiving telegrams to prepare rooms for the refugees, and the people are coming in crowds."

"Our friend, the Senior Luna, and his son Felis have been taken by Bernardo Bravo! Only by an enormous ransom was he able to save his wife and daughters, and his friends must now pay for him."

"At the ranch of the rich Spaniard, Alvarez, there has been a great battle in which the red-faggers were defeated with losses. Now Bernardo Bravo swears he will avenge his men, and Alvarez has armed his Yaqui workmen."

"He is a brave man, this Colonel Alvarez, and his Yaquis are all warriors from the hills; but Bernardo has



"Two Men, One of Them a Rural!"

other like it. At this the Yaqui cocked his head to one side and regarded him strangely.

"Why you no dig gold?" he asked at last, and then Bud told him the story.

"We have an enemy," he said, "who might steal it from us. So now we wait for papers. When we get them, we dig!"

"Ah!" breathed Amigo, his face suddenly clearing up; "and can I work for you then?"

"Si," answered Bud, "for four dollars a day. But now you help me watch, so nobody comes."

"Stawano!" exclaimed the Indian, well satisfied, and after that he spent hours on the hilltop, his black head thrust out over the crest like a chuckawalla lizard as he scanned the land below.

So the days went by until three weeks had passed, and still no papers came. As his anxiety increased Phil fell into the habit of staying in town overnight, and finally he was gone for two days. The third day was drawing him out or know the reason why. Either that or he would go after Aragon and take it out of his hide.

It was outside Bud's simple cot even to question his pardner's innocence, but, innocent or guilty, he would have him out if he had to tear down the wall.

"Two men!" he called, dashing up to the tent; "one of them a rural!"

"Why a rural?" asked Bud, mystified.

"To take me!" cried Amigo, striking himself violently on the breast. "Lend me your rifle!"

"No," answered Bud, after a pause; "you might get into trouble. Run and hide in the rocks—I will signal you when to come back."

"Muy bien," said the Yaqui obediently, and, turning, he went up over rocks like a mountain-sheep, bounding from boulder to boulder until he disappeared among the hills. Then, as Bud brought in his horse and shut him hastily inside his corral, the two riders came around the point—a rural and Aragon!

Now, in Mexico a rural, as Bud well knew, means trouble—and Aragon meant more trouble, trouble for him. Certainly, so busy a man as Don Cipriano would not come clear to his camp to help capture a Yaqui deserter. Bud sensed it from the start that this was another attempt to get possession of their mine, and he awaited their coming grimly.

"Gardes," he said in reply to the rural's abrupt salute, and then he stood silent before his tent, looking them over shrewdly. The rural was a hard-looking citizen, as many of them are, but on this occasion he seemed a trifle embarrassed, glancing inquiringly at Aragon. As for Aragon, he was gazing at a long line of jerked meat which Amigo had hung out to dry, and his drooped eye opened up suddenly as he turned his cold regard upon Hooker.

"Senior," he said, speaking with an accented harshness, "we are looking for the men who are stealing my

cattle, and I have no far to go. Where did you get that meat?"

"I got it from a deer," returned Bud; "there is his hide in the fence; you can see it if you'll look."

The rural, glad to create a diversion, rode over and examined the hide and came back satisfied, but Aragon was not so easily appeased.

"By what right," he demanded truculently, "do you, an American, kill deer in our country? Have you the special permit which is required?"

"No, senior," answered Hooker soberly; "